

Calvin Coolidge
Vermonter



COL. JOHN COOLIDGE
and the room in which he gave the oath of office to his son,
President Calvin Coolidge, August 3, 1923

“We are the possessors of tremendous power, both as individuals and as States; the great question of the preservation of our institutions is a moral question. Shall we use our power for self-aggrandizement or for service?

“It has been the lack of moral fibre which has been the downfall of the peoples of the past.”

From address of Calvin Coolidge, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier, Vt., January 21, 1921.

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ADDRESS BY EARLE S. KINSLEY

STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BURLINGTON, VERMONT

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Calvin Coolidge, Vermonter

Circumstances often raise men to high place. Circumstances do not make men; they give them opportunities. Calvin Coolidge has been raised to the highest place in the government of our country. Circumstances have made this possible. It was the man—not circumstances—who translated opportunity into achievement and evolved from the country boy of Vermont a strong national figure. This man is proud of Vermont; proud of her nature; proud of her folk and their simplicity—their praises he often sings; otherwise he seldom praises men or things. This man knows the plain people of Vermont—he is one of them.

One of his early speeches contains the following tribute to his native State:

“Vermont is my birthright. Here one gets close to nature, in the mountains, in the brooks, the waters which hurry to the sea; in the lakes, shining like silver in their green setting; fields tilled, not by machinery, but by the brain and hand of man. My folk are happy and contented. They belong to themselves, live within their income and fear no man.”

The story of Calvin Coolidge's boyhood among the hills of Vermont is a story of a faithful and industrious son. He was good, raw material, and had an instinctive sense of right, and character to live it. He was not extraordinary; he did his work at school and was a clever hand on the farm.

A visitor at the Coolidge home at Plymouth in the spring of 1920, when Calvin Coolidge was under consideration as a possible presidential candidate, asked his father—Colonel John Coolidge—about Calvin as a boy on the farm and if he was a good worker. The Colonel maintained his habitual silence for a period and then replied: “It always

seemed to me that Calvin could get more sap out of a maple tree than any of the other boys around here."

Calvin Coolidge first attended school at the little district school house at Plymouth; he graduated from Black River Academy (in Ludlow) in 1890, and although qualified for college at 18, he studied at St. Johnsbury Academy a year, and became a member of the class of 1895 at Amherst (Mass.). As a student he was neither brilliant nor spectacular, but faithful.

His first public address was an Independence Day oration, delivered in Plymouth, the summer of 1892.

In his junior year in college he participated in debates, where his clear perception of issues made a marked impression on his hearers. During his senior year he entered a contest, open to seniors in all American colleges and universities, and won first prize of \$100 for an essay entitled "The Principles of the Revolutionary War."

He graduated from Amherst in 1895 and returned to Plymouth for the summer; entered the law office of Hammond & Field at Northampton in September, and was admitted to the Massachusetts bar July 2, 1897.

Soon after Coolidge entered the office of Hammond & Field, the former was elected district attorney, and the latter mayor of Northampton. The political atmosphere apparently was infectious. Fate pointed the path, and the country lost a chief justice but found a president. Coolidge was adapted to the accurate work of a learned lawyer, but early he interested himself in the science of politics and as a consequence is not conspicuous for his legal activities.

Following his admission to the bar in 1897, his first political office was as member of city council, 1899; city solicitor, 1900-1; clerk of the county court; state representative, 1907-8; mayor, 1910-11; state senator, 1914-15; lieutenant governor, 1916-19; governor, 1919-20—to which office he was elected by the largest vote ever recorded in Massachusetts. He was then elected vice-president and familiarized himself with national politics, presiding in the senate, and sitting in cabinet meetings, by invitation of President Harding, until he became President.

He has never failed in securing any office he sought, and such a record is not possible for a man who is not profoundly human and honest.

Although he has but few intimates, he practically never loses a friend, despite the fact that his terms of friendship are somewhat difficult, requiring honesty, wisdom, dependability and humorousness.

Coolidge has never been opposed personally—having no enemies in the usual sense; few men have fewer critics.

His speeches are marked for their conciseness. His manner of life has taught him to understand men of all types. He has been a greater asset to public service than public service has been an asset to him.

The President is regarded by those who know him best as a man who acts promptly and vigorously.

He is little affected by the pomp of power. His idea of life is duty; the honors, as well as the failures, that follow are to him of incidental nature. Consequently, success elates and failure depresses but little, particularly when, after patient inquiry, he has done the best he can.

He possesses the New England smile; is direct and definite, but not brusque for the mere sake of being so.

A man taciturn and prudent by nature is apt to be judged as devoid of deep feeling, and possessing no independent opinion. The contrary is true in case of the President, who has strong feeling, decided, definite and independent opinions.

His seeming sternness is derived from the hardihood of a Vermont farm training in early life, which was genuine and without frivolity. Doubtless his antecedents were of like character, and his inherited tendencies were adapted to and developed by his environment.

Cautiousness, deliberation, patience and conscientiousness are the characteristics of such ancestry and living.

He is not a farmer but as a vacation often assists with some work in the fields; his great grandfather, grandfather, father and he were born on the same farm.

He gave his well-known political creed while president of the Massachusetts State Senate—"Do the day's work,

whether it be to protect the rights of the weak or help a corporation to serve the people better; don't be a standpatter or a demagogue, though called either; be as revolutionary as science, and reactionary as the multiplication table."

Reputation will have to be based on merit to have weight with him. Though conservative by nature, he is opposed to radicalism, and to the idle rich. He believes in the dignity of labor. In brief, he effects his principles in the manner in which he lives.

To locate the precise beginning—so far as public thought was concerned—of the Coolidge candidacy for President, is impossible; but it is commonly and correctly understood that his best friend, Frank W. Stearns, perceived in him, when he was a member of the State Senate, qualities which he believed equipped him to become President of our country.

That Coolidge's fame—due to the police strike—was shrewdly capitalized, is the fact; and it is well known that the booklet entitled "Have Faith in Massachusetts," containing excerpts from his public papers and addresses, had nationwide circulation. Mr. Stearns was responsible for the booklet and its distribution.

At the Chicago convention in 1920 Coolidge was placed in nomination for President by Speaker Gillett, in these words:

"A boyhood on a lonely farm in Vermont, bred in him frugality and self-reliance. The granite hills seem to have moulded his great indomitable character. Family self-denial gave him a college education at Amherst which broadened his native talents. His neighbors recognized the value of this quiet, sagacious man, and drafted him into public service, and he glided from one useful station to another, until he reached the highest office of our State. He is not showy or spectacular, but he never disappoints. The limelight attracts him less than the midnight oil. He is patient as Lincoln, silent as Grant, diplomatic as McKinley, with the political instinct of Roosevelt. His character is as firm as the mountains of his native State."

His nomination for the vice-presidency, like many events in his career, was dramatic. After Harding had been nominated by agreement among the friends of General Wood and Governor Lowden, the plan was to nominate Senator

Lenroot of Wisconsin as Vice-President, and his name was placed before the convention by Senator McCormack of Illinois; but there were many delegates who were not a part of the all-night conference (in which Colonel George Harvey, a native Vermonter, was one of the master minds), who decided to exercise their privilege as delegates and nominate a candidate.

Judge McCamant of Oregon, standing upon a chair and waving his coat in the air, was recognized by the Chairman, Senator Lodge, and addressed the convention in these words:

"When the Oregon delegation came here, instructed by the people of our State, to present to this convention as its candidate for Vice-President, a distinguished son of Massachusetts, he requested us to refrain from presenting his name. But there is another son of Massachusetts who has been much in the public eye in the last year, a man who is sterling in his Americanism, and stands for all the Republican party holds dear. On behalf of the Oregon delegation, I name for the exalted office of Vice-President, Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts."

Six times in our history fate has called the Vice-President to serve as President of the United States, and it was but natural that on each occasion the Nation's sorrow for its fallen leader was mingled with anxiety as to what the future had in store. Varying have been the circumstances, but surely none had in them a more intense appeal to patriotic feeling than the midnight scene when Calvin Coolidge took his oath of office at the hands of his father at the Vermont farmhouse—his birthplace.

The transition from one President to another was the quickest and easiest ever known—the chief reason being that no one was worrying or doubtful as to the character and ability of the new President.

No former Vice-President was so well trained to be President as Coolidge.

From a scientific viewpoint the present occupant of the White House is the most thoroughly equipped President as yet holding that high office; and in addition he possesses the right temperament—serene, patient, judicial, conscientious, and never acting until he has learned ALL the pertinent facts.

During the brief period he has been President he has exhibited these characteristics. He has made few, if any, mistakes, though he became President at a time when conditions were as delicate as they were critical.

In his first state paper, addressing the governors in conference, he revealed himself as a man who thinks soundly, and who has ability to state his conclusions and his position in the fewest possible words.

The President made himself clear in respect to his duty as Chief Executive in the matter of the enforcement of law, and also made it lucid to the governors that a like responsibility rested on them in the same matter.

There is nothing novel in his utterance on law enforcement. There is nothing new to be said on the subject. What he uttered is as old as government itself. It has been stated over and over again, but not since the government was founded has it been better stated than by Calvin Coolidge—perhaps never as well stated.

His address restated an ancient truth in such beautiful clarity, in such striking conciseness, in such rare simplicity that it stands out as a living document which will carry to the intelligence and conscience of the American people.

No first message of a President was awaited with more general interest than the one delivered by President Coolidge.

Much depends on the caliber of the man who is holding the helm during the present session of Congress, and who is seeking nomination and election. If there was any doubt of him before, there is none now. The message showed him resolute, upright and courageous, and that he measures up to the demand of the day for leadership—no equivocation, no straddling, no side-stepping on any of the controversial problems relating either to our domestic or foreign policies. In his address to the thousand or more officials at the semi-annual conference of federal business executives January 21st, he told them that to increase the tax burden was to disregard the general welfare, and that there can be no deviation from the economy program; and he urged upon all spending agencies of the government to increase their efficiency and curb the outgo at every turn.

In his recent statement regarding the charges uncovered by the Senate committee, investigating naval oil reserve leases, he clearly expresses himself by stating that if there has been any crime, it must be prosecuted; if there has been any property of the United States illegally transferred or leased, it must be recovered.

In response to the Senate resolution calling for the resignation of Secretary Denby, he denied the right of that body to sit in judgment upon the exercise of his exclusive discretion and on executive function, for which he was solely responsible to the people.

In a dignified manner the President demonstrated to the Senate that he will be guided by what he believes to be right, and said "I do not propose to sacrifice any innocent man for my own welfare; nor do I propose to retain in office any unfit man for my own welfare."

The President will protect those whose interests have been betrayed, to whatever extent the facts justify executive action. Every right of the people and the government will be protected.

The incident has given food for iconoclasts and cynics everywhere, and has made more difficult the faith of those who believe in the fundamental honesty of man.

It is an assault on the common man's faith in government; in the honesty of public men and the integrity of big business. Persons, who, for several years last past, have realized that the present system of organized society is under attack in many parts of the world, hope that no development of the present case will give excuse for extension of the attack into our own country.

Throughout this period of hysteria and display of partisanship, the President has been the one calm figure in Washington; and amid the murky atmosphere of denunciation it pleases Vermonters to know that his character stands unsullied.

He has done his day's work and stands unmoved in his program of constructive legislation for the welfare and prosperity of the country. He has never swerved from the Mellon plan. He has never swerved from his refusal to convict before judgment.

His appeal for action by Congress before March 15th in passing a joint resolution, authorizing a 25% reduction on 1923 income tax payments, was unanswerable, but not heeded.

He challenges Congress to accept with him the principle of a square, common sense deal for the people.

In Washington one man stands impersonating the hope of the nation—one man, who is so circumstanced that he can carry through to the desired end; the Senate cannot do it; the House cannot do it; no political organization of any candidate can do it.

It is fortunate Calvin Coolidge is President of the United States at this time, because of the fact that faith in his good sense and integrity is universal. It is not because of his magnetism, not because of his eloquence, not because of his personality—it is because the people trust him.

This reputation is standing him to good advantage now. Had he a reputation of different type, did he belong to the ordinary school of politicians, he would be afloat in the present storms. The American people believe he is a man of sound heart, of pure morals and of unflinching courage.

In the present situation, with a large amount of confidence in either of the major parties absent, temporarily, at least, the issue is going to be the individual leader, more than is generally the case.

While those of us present are not all of one political party, I feel certain we are of one mind, as the country seems to be, that it would be restful to have four years more of Calvin Coolidge.

The "Keep Coolidge" movement for his nomination at Cleveland June 10th, and election in November, naturally makes a sentimental appeal to Vermonters.

No native Vermonter has been elected President. The people of our State have an inherent pride that a man born and reared in Vermont—even though he left it, as many do, to seek fame and fortune in other states where conditions are more favorable to material progress—should now be the head of the nation, and the prospective candidate of his party.

The President married Grace Ann Goodhue of Burlington, Vermont, October 24, 1905. Mrs. Coolidge is a woman of

charm, tact and efficiency. She is not retiring nor does she attempt to escape her duties as First Lady of the Land. She is ready and willing to accept life as it comes, adapting herself gracefully to the changes as they evolve. Possessing, as she does, fine womanly dignity, there is no occasion for the slightest affectation. She has the poise of genuineness and is entirely at ease because of her naturalness.

The customs of Washington and the demands of her position do not worry her. She was fortunate in having experience at the Capitol as wife of the Vice-President and the opportunity it afforded her to familiarize herself with its people and their special expectations.

She was educated at the University of Vermont, and is possessed of a typical sturdy Vermont conscience which brings to the surface the best in all persons with whom she associates.

The story of Calvin Coolidge is an amazing one: A red-haired, freckled boy reared on a small mountain farm, who, while not a leader even among the boys of Plymouth and Ludlow, has become President of the United States. He always kept on going, on the farm, from the farm, on and up, always. Like Niagara, his is a story which grows on one, and as it is studied it overwhelms.

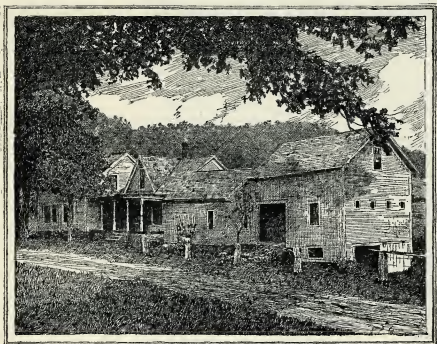
His is a story for every father and mother and child, a story of *responsibilities* for the first, and *opportunity* for the last. It is a lesson for every American, and for those across the seas, of *hope and realization*; that America is a country of *law, order and opportunity*; that success and happiness come to one not because of what is around him, family, fashion or fortune, but because of what is *in* him; not for what he *has*, but for what he *is*.

On the bridge of our Ship of State is a quiet man of good Vermont stock, suddenly called by Providence to assume command of the vessel. He brought with him a sound body, a clear and well-fashioned mind, and a high purpose. Years of experience in important, if lesser, public office had made him familiar with methods of transacting public business. His quiet dignity, his simple statements of sound political principle, his courage and his single-minded concern for public interest, have profoundly impressed the American people.

A man whom they knew but by name a few months ago is now their trusted leader and commander-in-chief. From farm and from factory, from office and from shop, come numberless tributes and testimonials of confidence. He is firm in the old fashioned American faith, and filled with the spirit of progress that would serve America in every new way that changing facts and needs make possible.

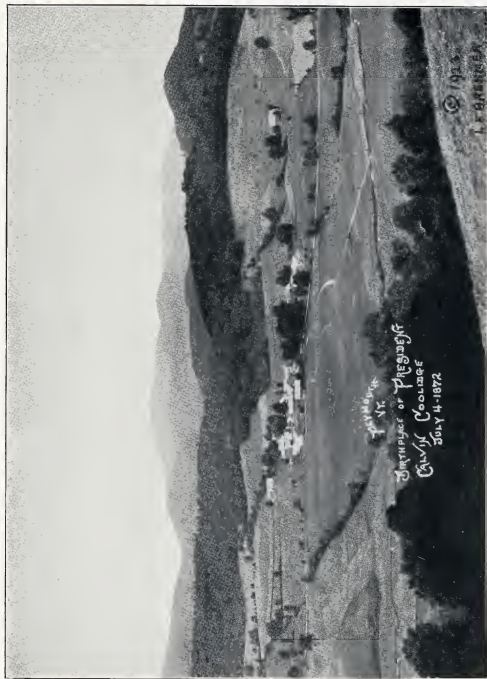
He will not come back to Vermont to live. His life is cast in greater human fields, but to Vermont he will return year after year; first, because sentiment draws him here; second, because for him there is more inspiration, a better opportunity for clarifying vision and readjustment of proportions in communion with Nature here than in any other corner of the earth.

Vermont shaped Coolidge. Something of Vermont's character will now shape the nation.



DRAWN FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY UNITED NEWS PICTURES

The Coolidge Homestead in the little Vermont Mountain Hamlet of Plymouth



VIEW OF THE
VALLEY OF THE
SUN
JULY 4-1872

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